

🕒 35 min

## Lament

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“Jesus wept” is the shortest verse in Scripture (Jn 11:35). Jesus is mourning alongside Mary and Martha over the loss of their brother Lazarus. Jesus loves Lazarus and says he will raise him from the dead. Yet Jesus’ power to resurrect the dead does not prevent him from grieving. He is not dismissive of others’ pain and suffering and he himself does not avoid it. Instead, he embodies the call to mourn with those who mourn (Rom 12:15).

**Lament is the conscious choice to engage sadness, pain, and anger before the Lord.** It is the proper response to the brokenness in the world, even as we hold on to hope. It is not just walking through the valley but being present to brokenness emotionally. Lament is not summoning disingenuous or contrived emotions but a **spiritual practice** that connects us with ourselves, others, and God.

Jesus was willing to travel to Bethany despite the continued threat of being stoned. Jesus choose to risk his life and physically be present. There are a lot of reasons we avoid pain. We might feel powerless, or overwhelmed. The discomfort of not knowing how to respond might distance us from others’ pain. Facing our emotions in their rawest form is vulnerable. But God is with us, and we don’t have to be afraid of being overcome. Because our hope is hidden in Jesus, we can press into pain knowing that God will carry us through.

Followers of Jesus must choose to make the journey to be physically present with grief. Like Jesus, we must mourn with those who mourn and turn our hearts towards—and certainly not away—from the pain of injustice.

We mourn while clinging to the hope of resurrection because sickness, death, and loss is worthy of our time and tears. In Christ, seeds of mourning grow into fruits of comfort and connection, immediately and eternally. Those who weep know that they are not alone.

### EMBODIMENT EXERCISE | 3 min

Begin with two minutes of silence, allowing everyone to settle in. Invite everyone to practice a breath prayer, saying the first line in the minds as they breathe in, and the second line as they breathe out.

[as you inhale] *My heart is heavy.*

[as you exhale] *Jesus be near.*

### OPENING PRAYER (RESPONSIVE) | 1 min

*One* The God of love opens our eyes to see the suffering in our world.

*Many* **And we will see.**

*One* The God of justice opens our ears to hear those who cry out.

*Many* **And we will hear.**

*One* The God of healing opens our hearts to acknowledge and share our pain.

*Many* **And we will bear it together.**

*All* **O God, you walk with us through the darkest valleys. Jesus, you share in our suffering and our grief. By your compassion, grant us what we need: the courage necessary to love boldly, the vulnerability necessary to trust, the submission necessary to heal, the conviction necessary to repent. We belong to you.**

### SCRIPTURE READING | 3 min

John 11:30-36

*Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.*

*When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"*

### INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION | 5 min

God intended for there to be shalom—peace between all relationships. Ask God to bring to your mind people, places, and situations where things are not as they should be. **Write down three things** God brings to mind in short phrases or sentences.

### COMMUNITY PRAYER | 15 min

One at a time, share one thing on your list. Imagine what it would be like for things to be as God intended in this situation. Pray your hopes aloud.

At the end of your prayer, say “May your kingdom come, and your will be done.” This will be the signal for the next person to pray.

Repeat this in your group until you run out of time or topics.

### A PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO LAMENT INJUSTICE | 1 min

*One person prays aloud.*

God, we prayed for broken hearts,  
And now our hearts are broken.  
We see the lack of love, kindness, and hope.  
It has been replaced with shame, violence,  
And hatred, based on eye shape, body type,  
and skin tone.

Oh Lord, how long will we suffer?  
Perhaps until you call us home.  
Give us strength to shine as lights in darkness,  
Until you call us home.

Son of Man, we need healing.  
Son of David, don't leave us alone.  
Fill us with your Spirit now,  
And make our hearts your home.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Pray aloud together.*

**You who spoke peace to chaos,  
and created everything that is, was and shall  
be, please return to us beauty and gladness,  
as we bring you our mourning and ashes,  
Amen.**